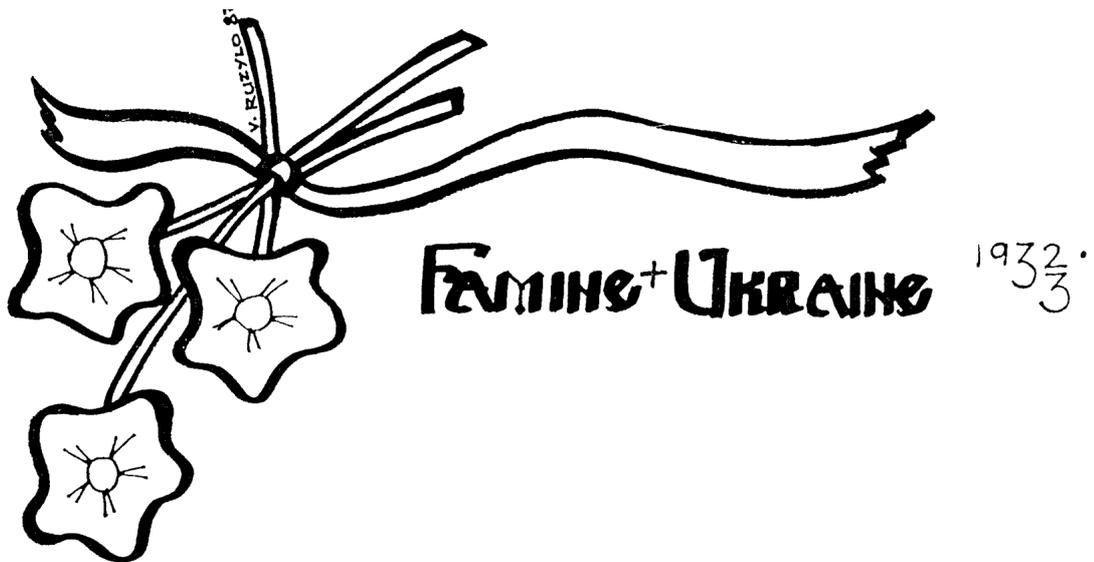


Teaching about the Holodomor

A Curriculum Resource for Educators



Compiled and coordinated by Oksana A. Wynnyckyj

World Congress of Ukrainians, November 2007.

Topics

Overall Topic: “We shall not forget”

Junior Kindergarten – Senior Kindergarten (Pre-primary Division)

Topic: “I will remember”

JK – “I will remember the hungry children”

SK – “I will remember the children that died”

Grades 1 – 3 (Primary Division)

Topic: “Children as victims during the Holodomor”

Grade 1 – “Children were hungry”

Grade 2 – “Children became orphans”

Grade 3 – “Children saw the horrors”

Grades 4 – 6 (Junior Division)

Topic: “Events during the Holodomor”

Grade 4 – “The harvest was confiscated”

Grade 5 – “The churches and clergy were destroyed”

Grade 6 – “Freedom was lost”

Grades 7 – 8 (Intermediate Division)

Topic: “World view of the Holodomor”

Grade 7 – “Disinformation in 1932-33 and the reaction of the Western World”

Grade 8 – “Genocide as a political tool”

The materials in this “curriculum resource” were originally developed by the teachers of St. Sofia School, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. This is an elementary school (JK – gr.8), which was established as an Eastern Right Catholic School. In 1987 – 1988, when the Ukrainian community was commemorating the 55 anniversary of the Holodomor the teachers of the school decided to make the commemoration a school-wide event.

Contributing teachers: Nadia Belej, Yvonne Bortkiewicz, Olia Misiurka, Hanya Ostapiuk, Nadia Ruzhyckyj, Larissa Tymchyshyn, Vlad Ruzylo, Oksana A. Wynnyckyj.

The Holodomor Button



Description:

The button consists of yellow wheat bound by a black ribbon with blue and yellow forget-me-nots in the foreground. The words are printed on a blue background and the numbers on a yellow background.

Explanation:

Wheat	- the forced removal of a bountiful harvest
Ribbon	- in memory of the victims
Forget-me-not	- remind us of the need to remember
Blue and yellow	- colours of a free Ukraine

Button concept developed by Yvonne Bortkiewicz
Artwork by Vlad Ruzlyo

Pre-Primary Division

Topic: “I will remember”

Sub-topics: Junior Kindergarten – “I will remember the hungry children”
Senior Kindergarten – “I will remember the children that died”

There is much discussion concerning the issue of whether or not children aged 4 and 5 should be taught about the Holodomor. At St. Sofia School we decided that since the entire school was participating in remembering and commemorating the victims, that even the youngest children should be included.

Today, Ukrainian communities all over the world light candles on the fourth Saturday of November in memory of the victims of the Holodomor. Vigils and services are conducted which are attended by entire families. It is therefore, only right that the smallest of our children should have an awareness of the tragedy and remember the children, who did not survive.

Even the youngest child understands that to pray means “to talk to God”. Praying out loud and in a group is important. There is power in prayer. When we pray for children and with children, we are passing on a legacy of commitment and faith to the next generation.

For our youngest children, we have suggested a prayer and the wearing of the commemorative button as activities for the day of remembrance.

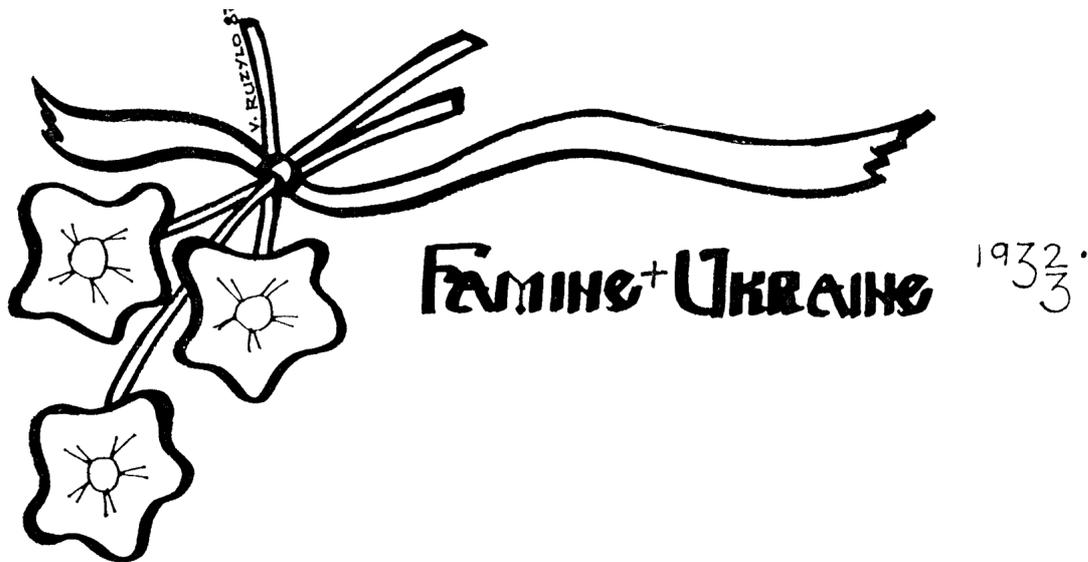
Let us remember:

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)

Suggested pre-primary activities:

1. Cut out light blue flower shape and yellow circles out of coloured paper (one for each child). Have each child paste the yellow circle in the middle of the flower shape.
2. Tie a black ribbon around a large candle. Have each child place his/her flower of remembrance (forget-me-not) beside the candle.
3. Light the candle and pray with the children.
4. At the end of the day, attach each child’s flower of remembrance (forget-me-not) to a copy of the prayer and send home.

Activities prepared by Nadia Belej



Dear Heavenly Father from above, help us to remember the Ukrainian children who were hungry long ago in Ukraine. They were hungry because bad people took away all their food and they had nothing to eat. We pray for all hungry children. Please keep them in your care. Amen.

Primary Division

Topic: “Children as victims during the Holodomor”

Sub-topics: Grade 1 – “Children were hungry”
Grade 2 – “Children became orphans”
Grade 3 – “Children saw the horrors”

There is much discussion concerning the issue of whether or not children aged 6 to 8 should be taught about the Holodomor. At St. Sofia School we decided that the entire school would participate in remembering and commemorating the victims of the Holodomor, including the younger children.

Today, Ukrainian communities all over the world light candles on the fourth Saturday of November in memory of the victims of the Holodomor. Vigils and services are conducted which are attended by entire families. It is therefore, only right that all of our children should have an awareness of the tragedy and remember those who died of hunger during the Holodomor.

All children are able to understand that to pray means “to talk to God”. Praying out loud and in a group is important. There is power in prayer. When we pray for children and with children, we are passing on a legacy of commitment and faith to the next generation.

For our primary children, we have suggested a prayer, the wearing of the commemorative button and some additional activities for the day of remembrance.

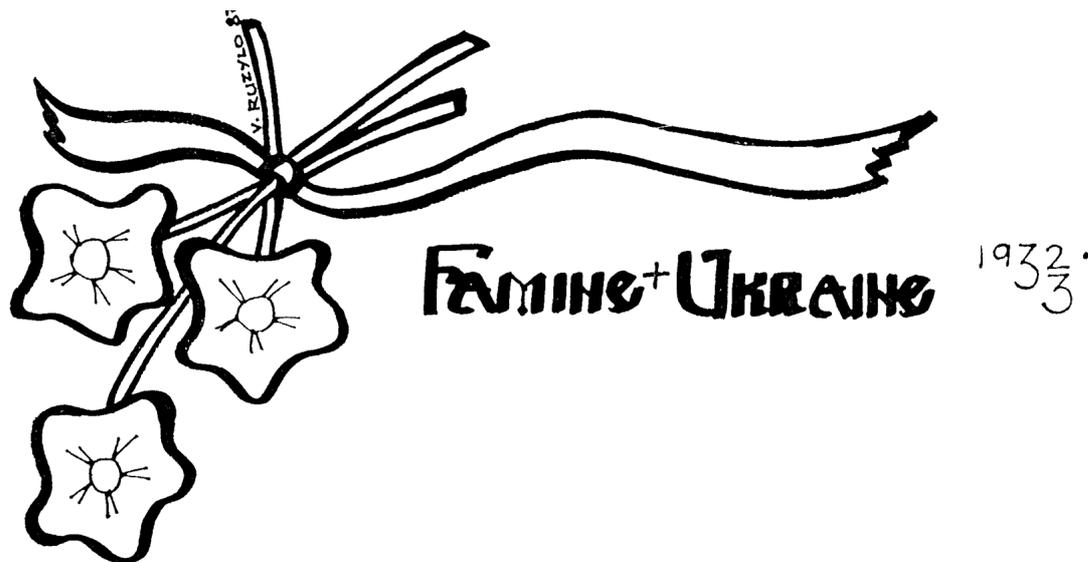
Let us remember:

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)

Suggested primary activities:

1. Place an icon of Mother Mary and Baby Jesus in the classroom. Discuss with the children the fact that Mary loved her son as a mother and that Jesus loved her.
2. Prepare a small bun and a candle for each child. Discuss the symbolism of the bread, the fact that it is a staple and that because the entire harvest was taken away, people had nothing to eat and starved to death.
3. Light the candle and pray with the children.
4. At the end of the day, let each child take the bun, candle and a copy of the prayer home to be shared with their family in remembrance of the victims of the Holodomor.

Activities prepared by Larissa Tymchyshyn.



Dear Heavenly Father from above, help us to remember the Ukrainian children who died of hunger long ago. They died hungry because bad people took away all their food and they had nothing to eat. We pray for all hungry children. Please keep them in your care. Amen.

Grade 1

Topic: “Children as victims during the Holodomor”

Sub-topic: “Children were hungry”

Suggested activities:

It is recommended that teachers stress the number 10 million to the children, relating this number to individual incidents that actually occurred during the Holodomor. It is important that children understand the grief and horror experienced by children during that time.

The following incident was retold by Mykola Prychodko. When relating it, tell the children the person’s name, emphasizing the fact this is an eyewitness account and that the event really took place.

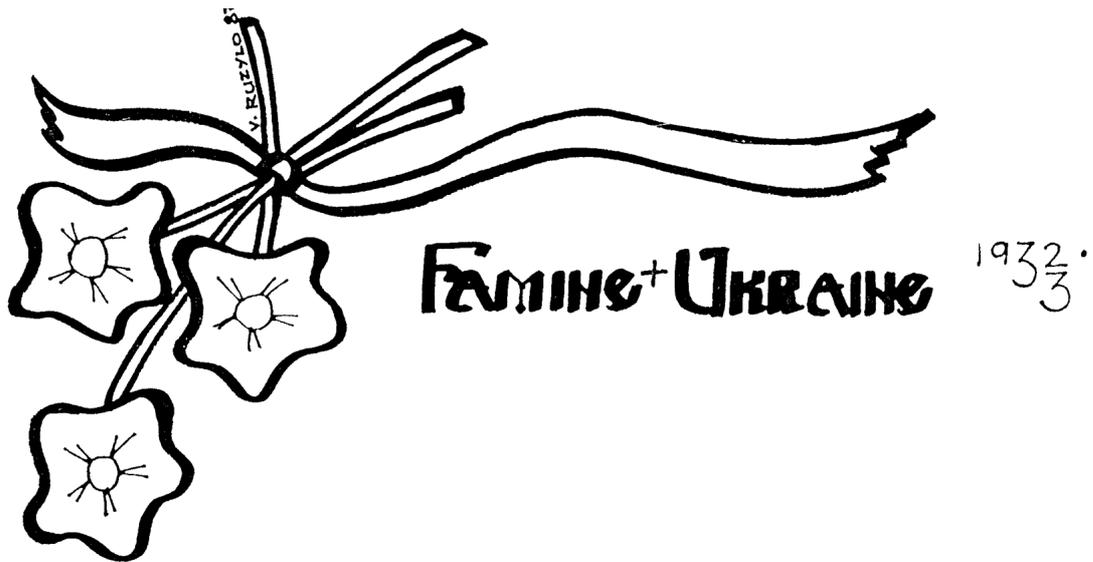
There is another unforgettable incident, which I witnessed in that year of 1933. It happened in the spring, as I was riding on the train from Kyiv to Uman. At the Monsteryshche station 12 farm laborers came aboard, their faces bloated with starvation, tattered and dirty, all on their way to work on a state farm. With them was a young lad, about 14 his hands tightly pressed against his chest, inside the shirt.

Like a pack of wolves, the men gathered around the boy, their hungry eyes glued to the hand at this bosom. The lad tightened his grip upon his possession – a slice of black bread – and stared back with frightened eyes at the fierce, unshaven, swollen caricatures of human faces around him. To a man, they were urging and pleading with him to share the bread with them. Tomorrow, they promised there would be boiled potatoes at the farm. Maybe even bread!

The hungry boy stoutly refused. His mother, he explained had somehow procured that one slice for him and had admonished him to save it for tomorrow.

The tragic scene ended when the twelve men, as though electrified by a command, fell upon the lad and tore away the bread, which crumbled and scattered over the floor. The starving, snarling, human beasts tore the crumbs out of each other’s fingers, scratched them out of crevices, as though in a paroxysm of insanity. The hungry youngster sobbed bitterly, but for the men he had already ceased to exist.

From *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Vol.1), Toronto, 1953.



Draw a hungry child holding a piece of bread.

Grade 2 & 3

Topic: “Children as victims during the Famine”

Sub-topic: Grade 2 - “Children became orphans”
Grade 3 - “Children saw the horrors”

Suggested activities:

It is recommended that teachers stress the number 10 million to the children, relating this number to individual incidents that actually occurred during the Holodomor. It is important that children understand the grief and horror experienced by children during that time.

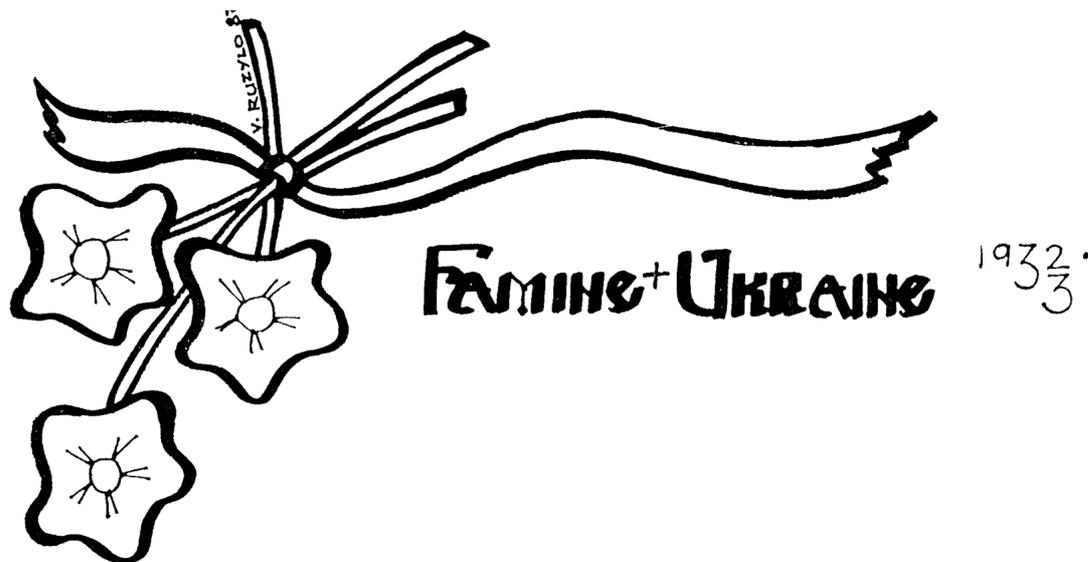
The following incident was retold by I. Mariupilsky. When relating it, tell the children the person’s name, emphasizing the fact this is an eyewitness account and that the event really took place.

In 1933 I was living in Mariupil.

One day, as I waited in a queue in front of the store to buy bread I saw a farm girl of about 15 years of age, in rags and with starvation looking out of her eyes. She stretched her hand out to everyone who bought bread, asking for a few crumbs. At last she reached the storekeeper. This man must have been some newly arrived stranger, who either could not or would not speak Ukrainian. He began to berate her, said she was too lazy to work on the farm, and hit her outstretched hand with the blunt edge of a knife blade. The girl fell down and lost a crumb of bread she was holding in the other hand. Then the storekeeper stepped closer, kicked the girl and roared:

“Get up! Go home, and get to work!” The girl groaned, stretched out and died. Some in the queue began to weep. The communist storekeeper noticed it and threatened: “Some are getting too sentimental here. It is easy to spot enemies of the people!”

From *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Vol.1), Toronto, 1953.

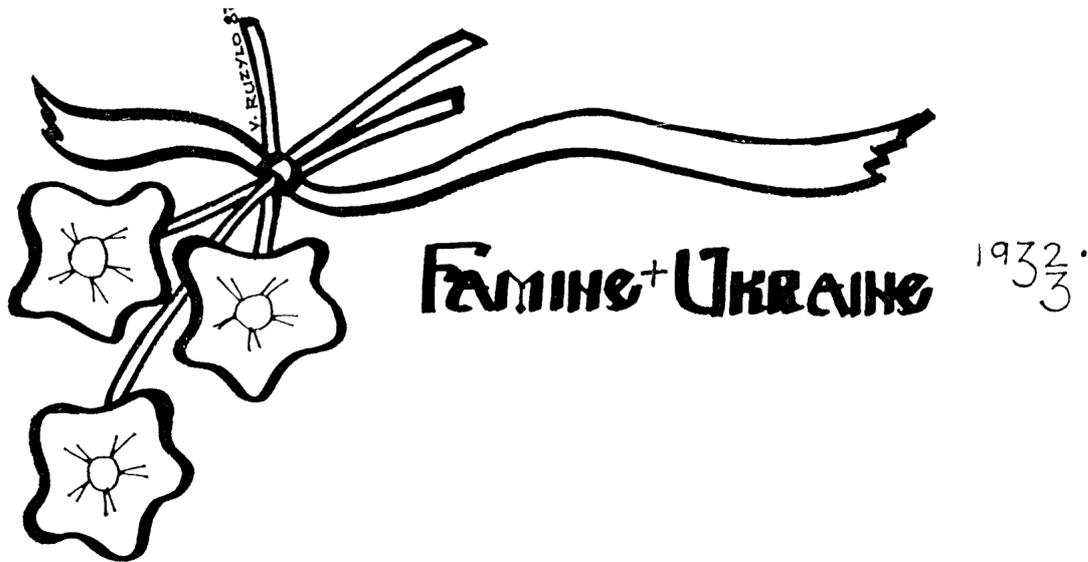


The forget-me-not is a pale blue flower with a yellow centre. These forget-me-nots remind us of all the Ukrainian children, who died during the Holodomor.

Colour the forget-me-nots on this page.

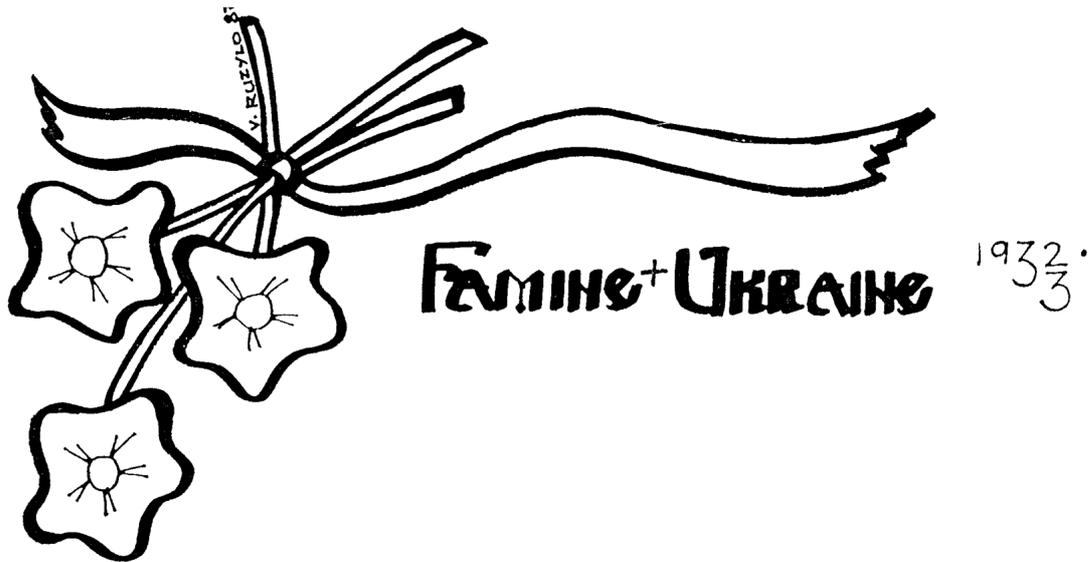
The forget-me-nots are tied with a ribbon. The ribbon shows our sadness because 10 million Ukrainians died during the Holodomor.

Colour the ribbon black.



Draw a group of hungry children finding a stalk of wheat in the ditch.

Write two words to describe how you felt when you were drawing the picture:



Holodomor Day is a special day when we remember the people who died of hunger because all of their food was taken away from them.

Write a two sentences about Holodomor Day!

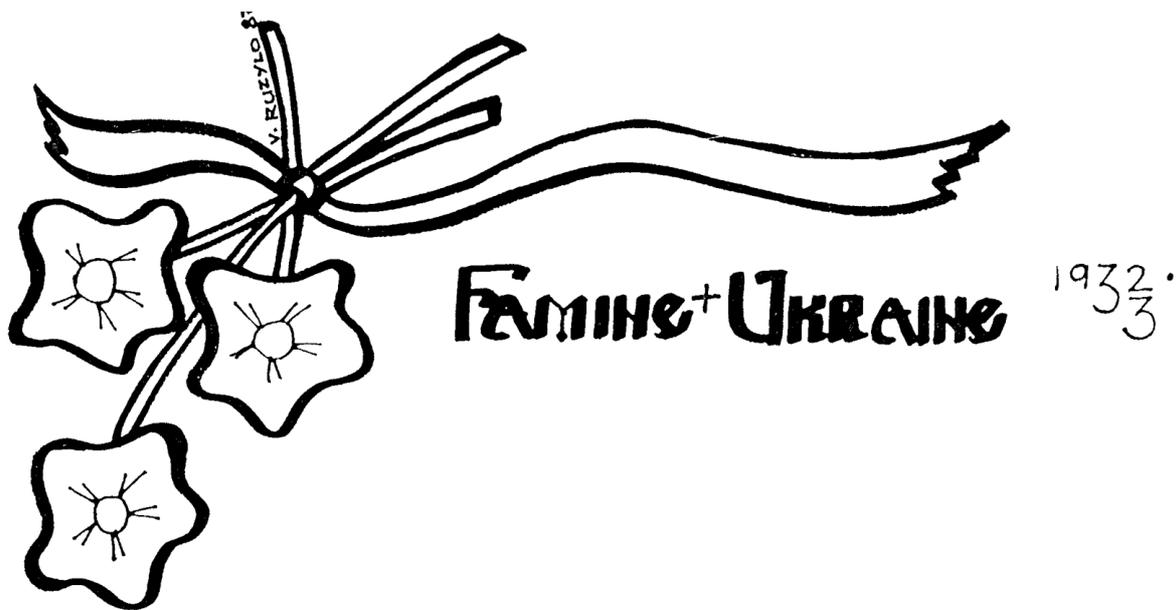
Use this beginning:

Holodomor Day is _____

Junior Division

Topic: “Events during the Holodomor”

Sub-topics: Grade 4 – “The harvest was confiscated”
Grade 5 – “The churches and clergy were destroyed”
Grade 6 – “Freedom was lost”



Grade 4

Topic: “Events during the Holodomor”

Sub-topics: “The harvest was confiscated”

Suggested activities (to accompany “How I Lived Through the Famine of 1933):

1. Find the Poltava region of Ukraine on a map.
2. Perform a play with the following scenes:
 - a) “Activists” come to seal the house.
 - b) People try to hide food.
 - c) “Grain collectors” come to the village.
3. Write a letter from the perspective of a victim of the Holodomor to his or her family living in Canada, Australia or the U.S.A.
4. Design a monument for the victims of the Holodomor.
5. Discuss the feelings and emotions survivors of the Holodomor would have. Consider the loss of family and friends as well as possible medical ramifications.
6. Research what other famines there have been in the world and compare them to the Holodomor of Ukraine.



The following is a true story. It was published in a book called *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*.

How I Lived Through the Famine of 1933

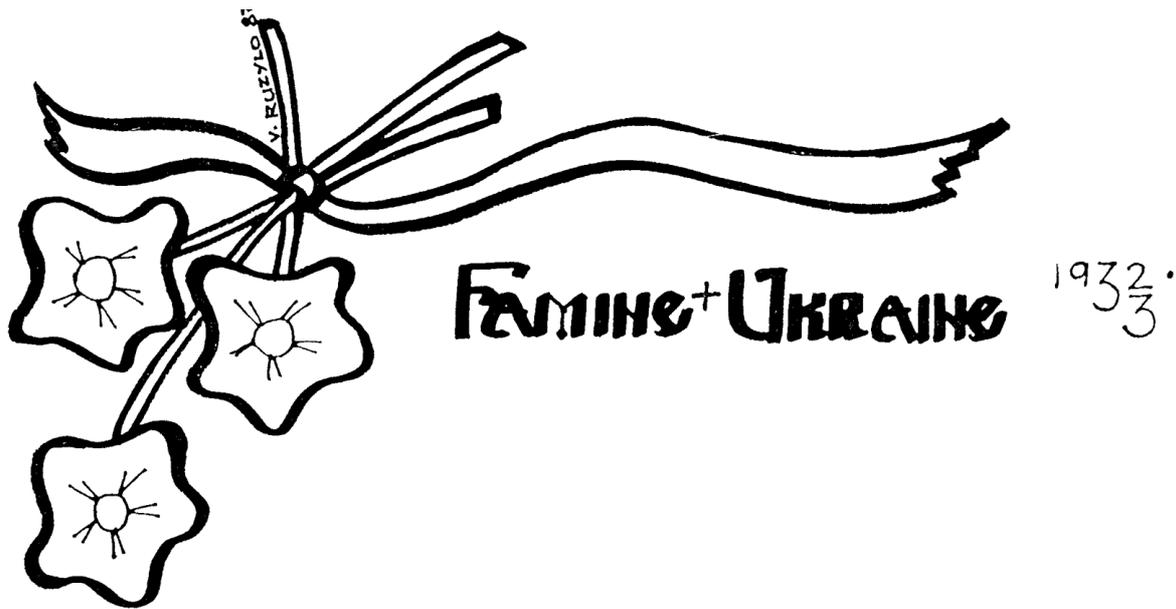
I am the son of a farmer from the once prosperous Poltava region. My parents had 25 acres of land, a team of horses and two cows. There were nine persons in the family. We joined the collective farm when our neighbors did and our land, horses, cows and farm implements were taken away. Three months later we were notified that we were classed as "kurkuls" and were subject to "dekurkulization of the third category", that is we had to vacate our house. Soon village "activists" appeared, sealed our house and everything in it, and took us to the hamlet of Matviytsi where all "kurkuls", destined to die of hunger with the poor natives of that place, were taken.

Before we were hustled out of our home, my father managed to conceal some grain in the leggings of his boots and we lived on this for a few days in the hamlet. Then came the ordeal by hunger. There was no food, and our bodies began to swell. It was at that time when hordes of "grain collectors" invaded the villages and searched for concealed stores in the ground, in granaries, stables, orchards, fields and even wells.

My father died on the road near the hamlet and his body lay there for ten days - nobody buried him, because the dead lay scattered everywhere. My mother could not buy him because she too had become swollen with hunger; her body was covered with sores and she was very weak. She could hardly walk and the seven hungry children beside her looked even worse than she did. The things we had to eat. Even now the memory haunts me and a lump rises in my throat. Merciful God, forgive me!

I don't know where or when my father was buried. After his death, one day my mother and three little sisters joined him. Before they died the little darlings stretched their tiny hands asking pitifully for some food. All of us were small, we could not bury our mother and sisters, and their bodies lay in the house a long, long time. Three other sisters and I were still alive, but we could not walk, only crawl. We would crawl thus to our mother and lie beside her.





Fact sheet

By the summer of 1932, 69% of all Ukrainian farm families and 80% of all farmland had been forcibly collectivized.

During collectivization Ukrainian peasants resisted and therefore, many were killed and others deported to Siberian camps.

The leadership of the resistance was composed of “kulaks” and “subkulaks”. Once these had been killed or deported, people were forced into collective farms.

In July 1932, Moscow ordered 6.6 million tons of grain to be delivered from the lands of Ukraine. This quota was 2.3 times the amount marked prior to collectivization.

Any person who was caught storing food during the fall of 1932 was subject to immediate execution or imprisonment for not less than 10 years.

Grain taken from the Ukrainian peasants was sold in London and New York.

The border between Russia and Ukraine was blocked and no food supplies allowed to be brought in.

Peasants were barred from cities and if some should arrive in the cities it was forbidden to help them, feed them or give them medical help.

Packages of food shipped from Canada and the U.S.A. were stopped at the border to Ukraine and sent back.

The International Red Cross and other relief agencies were forbidden to enter Ukraine.

The Soviet officials were aware of the magnitude of the famine, but chose to ignore it and deny its existence to the Western World.

No fewer than 10 million people died of starvation during the Holodomor.



Glossary

- kulak** anyone who owned land. Typically, they would have had about 12 acres, a cow, a horse, ten sheep, a hog and about 20 chickens.
- dekulakization** the process by which all private land became state owned and the land owners were forcibly removed from their lands and exiled.
- subkulak** anyone who attempted to defend the rights of the kulaks and was therefore also labeled "an enemy of the people."
- collectivization** land was given over to the state and collective farms were formed.
- brigades** groups of communist party members, who came into the villages and entered homes to search for any food people may have hidden.

Grade 5

Topic: “Events during the Holodomor”

Sub-topic: - “The churches and clergy were destroyed”

Suggested activities (to accompany the eyewitness accounts):

1. Divide students into six groups.
2. Assign one village to each group.
3. Have students do the following tasks:
 1. List the names of the people who were persecuted.
 2. List the names of the people who assisted the Soviet government.
 3. Describe what happened to the church building.
 4. Describe what happened to the people who were loyal to the church.
 5. List the years in which the vents took place.
4. As a class:
 1. Locate the Poltava and Chernihiv regions of Ukraine on a map.
 2. Discuss the similarities and differences between the various accounts.
 3. Discuss the historical importance of direct identification of people’s names to verify the authenticity of eyewitness accounts.

The following information was provided by M. Yawdas in the book *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* and is included as teacher information.

How Communists Persecute Clergymen

I am a priest of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church which was reborn in 1921, progressed under the leadership of two martyred Metropolitans, Vasyl Lypkiwsky and Mykola Boretsky, fell victim to the Soviet Communist regime and suffered terrible destruction. This church had thirty-six bishops and over three thousand priests who, along with tens of thousands of the faithful, died on the Solovetsky Islands, in the concentration camps of Dallag, Siblrag, Bamlag, White Sea Canal, in Kolyma and other distant points of exile.

In 1942, when Ukraine was temporarily free of Russian-Communist occupation, 270 priests returned from exile with dreadful memories of their experiences, and with impaired health. I was one of them.

I was arrested by the GPU on September 8th, 1929, in the village of Pidvysoka in the Uman District. I was then twenty-six years of age and had served my people for four years as a priest. I spent a day and a half in prison with two other men of about thirty years of age. One was imprisoned for murdering his wife, and the other for stealing a farmer's cow.

Then we were taken, under escort, to Uman, a distance of about thirty-five to forty miles, which we walked all the way. Throughout the whole trip our escort reviled and ridiculed me. According to him clergymen were greater criminals than robbers or murderers.

After spending the night in the Uman militia centre I was taken to the Uman GPU headquarters. There I was told to

take my place in the corridor, where several other prisoners were already seated. Sitting there, I could see through the window trucks bringing more prisoners to our building. Soon, there were over a hundred of us sitting and waiting.

My turn came, and I was questioned. I was ordered to renounce the priesthood, and when I refused they beat me. All my papers were taken away such as my pastoral document, my diploma and others.

All those already interrogated were taken to the prison by the GPU, under guard. In the prison courtyard a thorough search was made of every prisoner and we were all assigned to cells. During these searches such articles as knives, razors, belts, string, and others, were taken away. When I was searched I was relieved of my penknife, a belt and my silver cross, which was never returned to me.

I was thrown into a cell about twenty-four square yards in area, which already contained thirty-four men. I was the thirty-fifth and found a place beside the latrine.

The daily routine was as follows: in the morning we were given some dark, hot liquid called "tea". Later in the day we received 200 grams of black, very soggy bread and some "balanda". After this lunch we were taken out for a walk for ten to fifteen minutes. Back in the cell again the prisoners occupied themselves killing lice. This was our greatest calamity. In the damp cells jammed with human beings they thrived and multiplied and stung our bodies until we were covered with obvious sores.

I spent only a week in the Uman prison, and then was moved to Poltava. This was because I had served parishes in Poltava District and had been transferred to Uman only two weeks prior to my arrest. Thus, the Poltava GPU was to study my case.

Here I was placed in the GPU headquarters, where several other priests were already confined: Rev. Hryhoriy Kononenko, who lost his sanity there, Rev. Fedir Stryzhak, later executed, Rev. M. Nesterowsky, Rev. Volodymyr Slukhayesky and several others. Investigation of all clergymen was conducted by Baturyn, who was authorized by the GPU. He was an extremely cruel and wicked man. I was again asked to renounce the priesthood and beaten, but when this proved of no avail I was taken to the prison.

During the communist reign new prison buildings were added to those already in existence in Poltava. During tsarist times, Poltava had only one prison, on Kobylyatsky Street, but it now had in addition the one on Pushkin Street, one on Koloniyska Street, which was a converted Seminary, a prison at the District Militia Headquarters and several prisons in different sections of Poltava. I spent some time in the Kobylyatsky prison, although most of the time I was confined in the former seminary on Koloniyska Street.

This was a large three-story building packed closely with prisoners, the majority of whom were Ukrainian farmers indicted according to political articles. There were also many Ukrainian intellectuals: professors, doctors, schoolteachers and clergymen.

There was hardly a cell that did not hold a priest. I was in cell No. 67 with two other priests. They were both shot, while I was sentenced by the GPU College to seven years in the Administration of the Solovetski Camps of Special Assignment.

During a four-month period, October 1929 to February 1930, 28 Ukrainian Orthodox priests were jailed in the Poltava prisons. Five of them were shot, one became insane and the others were given five to ten-year terms of exile in the far north.

Instead of being sent to the Solovetski Camps of Special Assignment as originally ordered, I was for some reason taken to the Dallag Administration, first to the First Division near Vladivostok and later shifted to the coal mines of the second Division, at the Seventeenth Kilometer of the Suchan Tributary. There I picked coal for six years.

There were several chains of concentration camps in the Far East. The first chain, Dalrybosoyuz (The Far Eastern Fishing Association), was located along the shores of the Okhotsk and Japan Seas. The second chain was the Dalvostenroi; the third – Dallyes; the fourth – Daltransuhol; the fifth, Kolyma – Dalzoloto, and others.

In one region of Vladivostok I know of the following camps which functioned from 1930 to 1935: Sixth Stand, Bukhta Deomid, Ehersheld, First Stream, Second Stream, Sidanstoi, Sixth Kilometer of the Suchan Tributary, eighth Kilometer of the Suchan Tributary, Ninth Kilometer of the Suchan Tributary, Seventeenth Kilometer of the Suchan Tributary and the Location on the Suchan River. There may have also been other camps besides these eleven, which I knew well.

Living and working conditions in the concentration camps were as follows: the prisoners worked ten full hours in the pits digging coal, then they came out for the so called rest. Upon leaving the mine very prisoner was required to stand in line for bread, and in another line for soup or tea. This was a nerve-wracking procedure for us and took up much time. Bread was doled out according to the quotas accomplished: 1000 grams, 800 grams and 600 grams. The hot liquid was issued according to the amount of bread given.

We slept in bunks called “nary”, attached to the walls in tiers, in frame barracks of about 200 to 250 men to each barrack. In the middle stood a heater made from an iron mine wagon. Around this makeshift stove hung our undergarments, handkerchiefs and foot rags. The place was filthy and stinking. Prisoners who slept farther away from the heater came close from time to time to warm up a bit, then returned to their bunks. In winter they caught severe colds and quickly died.

The priests invariably got the worst jobs: coal diggers, latrine attendants, hose attendants, pick miners, and others. We were known as the “silent ones” because no matter what we said we were punished

for it and we had become reticent and aloof.

Persons could be, and were tried and sentenced for things they had said or done. For instance the GPU Trio selected 300 of the better men from among the prisoners in our camp: teachers, engineers, priests and farmers and shot eighty-seven of them in Vladivostok. The rest were sentenced to ten years in special political isolation camps.

There were also cases when people were burned at the stake. In Bukhta Siziman the chief of the Donalys Concentration Camp and his wife burned people alive, shot them with pistols or set the hounds on them. This chief’s terrorism was known throughout all the neighboring camps

Having served my term, I was released in 1936. I was denied all citizenship rights and the possibility of securing a permanent position. I traveled all over Ukraine and the Donets Basin working at temporary jobs, usually manual labor.

I lived under the communist regime for twenty-two years, from 1919 until 1941, in Ukraine and beyond its borders. During this time I was imprisoned for seven years in the Far East and for sixteen years, being a priest, I was denied all citizenship rights.

The Village of Deimaniwka (Pyryatyn, Poltava)

The church of St. Nicholas in this village was a frame building. It was closed in 1929 and the priest, O. Zhyrytsky arrested. There were certain indications that he was murdered in a GPU cell, although his family was told that he was serving a ten-year sentence without the right of correspondence.

He was a highly educated man and was held in high esteem not only in his own village but also by all surrounding villages. At the same time the church elder, Stepan Mudrenko, was arrested, along with Fedir Fedya and Nikifor Mudrenko. None of these was ever heard of again.

At the beginning of 1930 the crosses and the bells were removed from the belfry by the local activists, under the direction of the chief of the village council Ivan Hryhay and including: Mykhaylo Semeyak, M. Zozulya, Hrytsko Kostyany, Platon Kostyany, Ivan Saik, Petro Saik, Hrytsko Lohvyenko and others. On March 18, 1930 the whole group broke down the church door and wrecked everything inside. They called this an "anti-religious carnival". All icons were torn and piled in a heap outside and burnt with all the books and archives.

The rugs were taken and used in the Village Council "offices", and the costly vestments and silk altar cloths were ripped into small pieces and divided among the looters, to be made into tobacco pouches. After this vandalism the church stood vacant until 1932. From 1932 until the outbreak of the war with Germany in 1942 it was used by the Deimaniwsky collective farm, "the Red Woods", as a granary for wheat.

These incidents were retold by H. Senko and published in the book *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Toronto 1953.

The village of Rudiwka (Yabluniw, Chernyhiw)

The communists closed the church in this village in 1921, but it was not until 1930 that they destroyed it completely. This, however, was not easily accomplished. The villagers stalwartly defended their church. They took turns in standing guard beside it day and night the whole winter of 1929-1930. The women watched the daytime and the men at night. During the cold spells they made bonfires for warmth.

The village activists were helpless in their desire to wreck the church so they called the party komsomols from other villages (and the town of Pryluky) to their aid. Finally the destruction was accomplished on February 16, 1930. When several of their attempts at the church were repulsed by the villagers the activists quickly summoned two fire engines from Pryluky. These were told to disperse the crowd, who were stoically guarding their church, by turning the hose on them. The firemen did this and when a passage was cleared the hoodlums rushed in. The ladders from the fire engines were raised and soon they had the crosses and the bells down. The others tore inside, breaking and smashing everything in sight. Books, icons and ornaments were thrown outside and burned. The orgy was soon in full swing and all the activists were joining the "anti-religious carnival". The village prostitute, Nataalka Cheperys, donned the sacred vestments, draped herself with the embroidered altar cloth and, dancing around the burning heap, sang popular communist ditties.

"Representatives of the people" stood up and made loathsome speeches vilifying the Church and those who believed in God.

These incidents were retold by H. Senko and published in the book *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Toronto 1953.

The Village of Klushnykiwka (Myrhorod, Poltava)

The church of the Holy Mother of God was in this village. It was built by the villagers themselves under the supervision of an architect from Poltava. Rev. Vasyl Vasylenko was the pastor since its inception in the days of the Ukrainian National Revolution. He conducted all his services and sermons in the Ukrainian language. In 1929 he was arrested and confined to the Kharkiv prison. Later he was given a ten-year term in the far north without the right to correspond.

The church was taxed heavily. Almost daily two or three thousand rubles had to be paid. Those who defended the church were: Havrylo Sokhatsky, Viktor Sokhatsky, Maksym Sokhatsky, Yosyp Sokhatsky, Ulian Khodyak, Kurpian Horbyk, and others. On instructions from the Regional Party Committee the local activist called a meeting and decided to collect the villagers' signatures petitioning the closing of the church. This meeting was held in January 1930. The closing of the church was motivated by the need for a community centre for "educational-cultural" activities.

Those "voluntary" signatures were collected by: Petro Honcharenko, Anton Bondar, Nestor Len, and Oleksander Holoborodko. The church was stripped of all its precious possessions. Heading this action was T. Korol, authorized by the Regional Communist Party Committee. On the evening of February 15, 1930 all icons, books, archives and other articles were taken out in the courtyard and burned. Some people actually threw themselves into the fire to rescue some of the things, and managed to keep them hidden until the German occupation.

During this procedure the local communists got up and harangued the village saying that religion was the opiate of the people. The following day Ivan Chervyachuk and others went up and tore down the crosses and the bells. These were given to the state as scrap iron. The highly artistic woodcarving on the altar screen was broken up and burned.

In 1932 the communists attempted to make a community centre of the church. The people were determined not to allow this and the first time that workers arrived to start on the alterations they were driven away. The communists then acted in their usual manner. One night in the spring of 1932 the "Black Crow" drove up from Poltava and carried away over 30 people. They were mercilessly tortured in the NKVD chambers. Their names were: Maksym Sokhatsky, Yosyp Sokhatsky and Hryhoriy Korsun. Their fingers were squeezed by a closing door during interrogations and they were tied in special sacks and rolled. They were all given ten-year terms in the far north by a closed court without the right to correspond.

When the workers returned again, the women rushed into the church and took away whatever the communists had overlooked earlier. Some of these women were: Kateryna Kovalenko, Ulyana Harashchenko, Ewdokia Sylenko, Domakha Stenko, Kateryna Skhatska. By the time the renovation was completed, new orders came from the regional headquarters that it was to be used as a granary.

These incidents were retold by H. Senko and published in the book *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Toronto 1953.

The Village of Towkachiwka (Malodytske, Chernyhiw)

This village contained the church of the Holy Mother of God, which was destroyed by the following local communists: Yakiw Kumeyko, Stepan Malko and I. Lisnychenko, the village mayor. It was these men who decided on those who should be arrested in the village, who should be “de-kurkulized” and exiled. It was this trio who initiated the closing of the church in 1929.

First they arrested the priest, and no one knew what became of him. Then they went about the “formality” of closing and ruining the church. This was done in the fall of 1929. For the sum of 100 rubles and a quart of vodka the village activist climbed up to the belfry and knocked down the bells and the cross. A representative of the District Party Committee came, called the former head of the parish and asked him to go to the church with him and show him where the church valuables were hidden.

Entering the church, the devout church elder removed his cap and made the sign of the cross. The plunderers, who were with him laughed, and ridiculed him. In half an hour the vandals ruined everything. The Komsomols and activists broke up and tore the sacred paintings and decorations, giving full vent to their abnormal instincts. The Holy Scriptures and other books, which were the church’s treasures, the psalms and notes, were a pile of rubble in the middle of the floor. These barbarians also destroyed the special record books, which were kept by the local priests since the beginning of the sixteenth century. The altar screen was broken into splinters and everything was burned.

These incidents were retold by H. Senko and published in the book *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Toronto 1953.

The Village of Melyukhy (Chornukhy, Poltava)

The church in this village had two altars, Holy Trinity altar and the Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary altar. It was built in 1907 by local builders, Andriy Kapusta nad Pylyp Salyvon, in true Ukrainian style.

In 1929 the church was closed. Before this, however, numerous arrests were made to break the villagers' resistance. In 1931 the church was wrecked and looted. Two GPU agents from Chornukhy and Lohvytsya came into the village and with the help of local activists, Sydir Tserkovny and Hrytsko Punko, took down the bells. They dismantled the church dividing the loot among them later using it in their own homes.

At the same time severe reprisals were conducted against those who had defended the church. Because Pavlo Kapytanenko had been a church leader he was under harsh attack by the Soviet stooges. He was taxed unmercifully, and when he was unable to meet these demands his property was auctioned. Fedir Zarudhy a very poor farmer but a devout church member was also subjected to the same treatment. His barn and small shed were sold and even a tall poplar that grew in his garden was cut down and sold, to pay the taxes.

In 1934, when the church was made into a community centre, religious villagers refrained from entering it.

These incidents were retold by H. Senko and published in the book *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Toronto 1953.

The Village of Polova (Pryluky, Chernyiv)

This village had a church built of stone and annually commemorated the day of the Blessed Virgin. IN 1928, the Reverend Father Pylyp, who was the resident pastor, was arrested as an underground Petlyurist and exiled to the far north, where he was finally murdered in 1929 by a gang of hoodlums, the GPU guards.

On October 6, 1929 the local communists held a secret meeting where they decided to destroy the church. On orders from headquarters they called a general meeting on November 11th, in the school building. The presidium consisted of Stepan Chornomaz, Hryhoriy Chornomaz, I. Khytნიak and Petro Olyfirenko. The doors were guarded so that no one would leave the meeting.

When no one raised their hands to vote for the destruction of the church, all present were called to the front individually to sign a prepared statement. Only twenty names were signed: those of the activists and a few terrorized victims. The others refused to give in to this coercion. Two people openly stood up in defence, Kateryna Zinchenko and Fedir Pyatyhorets. Although no definite decision was reached the following day a document was dispatched to the District headquarters stating that “the people had petitioned for the closing of the church and only the ‘kukuls’ and their stooges protested”.

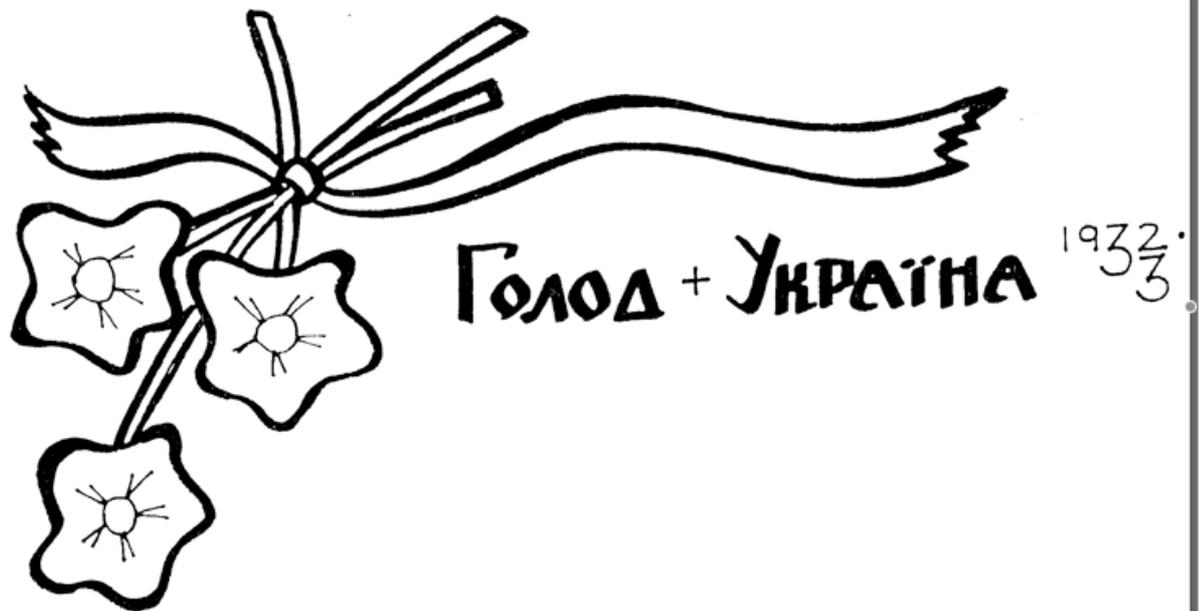
On November 19, 1929, the activists started the procedure of ruining the church, but the villagers interfered. A militia unit and a GPU group came to the village and made numerous arrests. All arrested were kept in prison for three days and interrogated. Some of the arrested were: Pyatyhorets, his wife and daughter, Dmytro Demyd, Maryna Bilka, Dmytro Bilka, Kost Zinchenko, Pylyp Filonenko and many others, who were mostly women.

After all the more courageous ones were arrested, the activists went ahead with their vandalism. T. Bondariev, a Russian from Moscow and then residing in the village went up and threw the cross down. For this he received a quart and a half of vodka. The date of this act was November 12 1929. On this same day the activist group sneaked inside the church and completed the destruction of the interior. The altar screen was smashed and later burned in front of the church with all the books, icons and other furnishings. The bells were taken down, fattened with hammers, and hauled to Pryluky.

Later some activists voiced the opinion that it had not been wise to take down all the bells, as they could have been used in case fire broke out. The church building stood deserted for many months, and later was used as a prison for "kurkuls".

The first "kurkuls" to be imprisoned there were the former church elder Dmytro Bilka and his wife. Her baby was taken away from her three days after birth and they were both shipped, with the older children, to Arkhangelsk. Several other families were arrested then and shipped to this northern outpost. None of them was ever heard of again.

These incidents were retold by H. Senko and published in the book *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Toronto 1953.



After reading the text, complete the following:

1. List the names of the people who were persecuted.
2. List the names of the people who assisted the Soviet government.
3. Describe what happened to the church building.
4. Describe what happened to the people who were loyal to the church.
5. List the years in which the events took place.

Grade 6

Topic: “Events during the Holodomor”

Sub-topic: “Freedom was lost”

Suggested activities:

1. Divide students into small work groups (3-4 students in each group).
2. Provide each student with a set of readings and each group with a copy of the accompanying activities.
3. The activities should be done over a period of 4 days with approximately 20 – 30 minutes devoted daily.
 - Day 1 -reading eyewitness accounts + group activity
 - Day 2 -group discussion
 - Day 3 -group presentation
 - Day 4 -class presentations and discussion
4. The following additional materials are needed for the groups:
 - “Collectivization”
 - Large sheets of paper
 - Large markers
 - Paint, paper, blue etc.
 - “The Famine”, “Sentenced to Five Years”, “I Testify”
 - Large sheet of paper
 - Markers
 - Copies of “The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms”
 - List of members of parliament for the area
 - “Communist Terror in Nahilne”
 - Meter stick or measuring tape
 - Masking tape
 - Tape recorder and blank cassette

Collectivization

Cold twilight that would soon change into real darkness covered the village of Velyki Solontsi in the county of Novy Sandzhar, in the Poltava region. The first autumn frosts that came in the wake of heavy rains made the roads very rough, a quiet evening.

Then the stillness is broken by the rattle of wagon wheels over the frozen bumps. It comes nearer, growing in intensity, and a wagon appears, then another, and yet another, a whole line of wagons. They turn to a wide road that leads to the town of Kobelyaky.

At this time, that is the end of November 1932, I was working in Velyki Solontsi together with my husband, and I knew from my own observation what was happening around us in the village, and in the whole district.

This was the time of collectivization and of attacks on individual farmers. The “centre”, that is Moscow, sent to Ukraine 25,000 party “activists” who, upon their arrival, formed commissions and brigades to promote the boon of collectivization. These brigades, formed from the poorest and bolshevized elements, were sent to the villages with instructions to establish collective farms by convincing farmers that the individual way of farming was part of the bourgeois capitalist system, built on exploitation; that it could not exist in a country which had a Soviet form of government; and that farming in a small way was wasteful, and in a big way it exploited the poorer farmers. Only the nationalized collective way of farming would bring happiness to all.

The farmers were lectured at “ten-house” meetings every day till twelve o’clock at night, and sometimes till morning. They sat, listened, asked questions, smoked and dozed in the heavy atmosphere, nodded their heads in agreement that perhaps it would be a better way, but did not want to agree to nationalization of their possessions.

The first step to success in collectivization was made when the land and home of a prosperous farmer, Andriy Sepity, who lived in the very centre of Velyki Solontsi close to the church, were confiscated. This property formed a basis for the collective farm, which received the name “Granit” (granite). The poorest farmers that is the landless and those having little land of their own and of course, all the activists who joined the communist party, flocked to it. The latter believed that a change in farming practices and in the social order would surely bring happiness to the working people.

Out of 500 farmers only 18 – 20 joined up, and even these were reluctant, the next day, to drive their cattle and take their farm implements to the collective.

Sepity was banished to Siberia, his wife and children driven out of their home, and they disappeared. Yet even this harsh measure did not make people join the collective farm. As a last resort, the communists formed a committee of three, which prepared a list of “kurkuls”, enemies of the Soviet government.

This list contained 52 names. I do not remember them all now, and can give only a few. The victims were: Yukhym Chmykhalo; Panas, Yukhym and Petro Dikhtyar; Halushka; Kryven; Polykarp, Petro and Danylo Kybkalo; Vasyl, Hryhoriy and Stepan Pudlo; Vasyl Sepity, brother of the first “kurkul” Andriy, Ivan and Petro Spivak.

When all the men on the list had been taken away, the authorities realized that at last they were on the right track and the families of the obstructionists were taken away at night to escape observation. Women and children were ordered onto wagons, and dumped off on the sandy stretch along Vorsklo River from the village of Shchorbiwka to Kuneva Hill, close to Kobelyaky. Tied and terrified they were thrown out like garbage, in the hope that they would perish there from cold and hunger.

“All kurkuls dirt must perish here,” said the secretary of the communist party centre, and ordered the teams to return home. “Those that would comfort and help the enemies of the Soviet government shall themselves be regarded as enemies. Let them freeze!”

The poor souls were forbidden to leave the place, and had to remain on that wasteland. In the morning, mothers dug deep holes in the ground, lined them with dry weeds and leaves and made covers out of osier-willow that grew on the riverbank. The holes sheltered their children, destined to become a sacrifice on the altar of collectivization. Making fires close to the holes they sat there forlorn, wrapped up in a few rags that they had managed to save from their homes.

But the collectivization was a success. The five collective farms initially planned were slowly being filled with people who chose the lesser evil of the two: to lose everything and do forced labor for “trudoden”, or go to Siberia, be separated from one's family and thus sentence it to inhuman suffering and death.

Glossary:

“ten-house” meetings – meetings held in every tenth house.

trudoden – working day

From: *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Vol. 1), Toronto, 1953.

Group activity:

Draw the following chart on a large piece of paper!

Personal property	Class property

List a variety of classroom items in the appropriate space.

Group discussion:

1. What are the benefits of having your own things?
2. What are the benefits of having things that belong to a group?
3. Imagine that all things had to be privately owned (e. g. Schools, hospitals, parks). What would happen?
4. Imagine that everything you have belonged to everyone else at the same time. What would happen?
5. Who should decide what belongs to one person and what belongs to a group of people?

Group presentation:

1. The word "irony" describes a situation in which someone says one thing but really means something very different.
2. Design an ironic poster with the words "Long live collective farming and a happy joyful life!"
3. Prepare a class presentation explaining why the poster is ironic.

The Famine

In the fall of 1930 the authorities made a list of my father's possessions and arrested him. The rest of us were marked for deportation to Siberia. My elder brother and sister took us smaller children and our mother, at night, to another county. There we spent most of the wintertime in a hole, which supplied sand for the neighborhood. Later we had to flee still further, to a cottage belonging to my mother's parents, where we lived secretly in the loft.

When the communists robbed the people of their grain in 1932 our mother died from hunger. Three of us were left; I was 11 and my sisters were 8 and 6. We lived in a cottage that was not heated and we ate whatever we could beg from the people. At that time my father was released from prison and joined us. He came to us swollen with hunger, like thousands of others in the village. In the spring of 1933 when the snow melted, I went with my father to dig in the fields for half-rotten beets or to gather grain at the site of grain stacks. A.S

Sentenced to Five Years

I would like to say a few things about the year 1933, though I was not in Ukraine at the time. My scant property was confiscated and I was given five years of penal servitude.

I served my sentence in Svir concentration camps on the Kirovsk railway line, stations Pakostya and Lodeinoe Pole.

During that winter alone, 1,800 people who were sent there from Lukiyanivska prison in Kyiv at the same time I was, died from hunger and cold there. Many died from dysentery and quite a number were injured when cutting forest tress. These people were mostly farmers, the so-called "kurkuls". They told many stories about the famine then raging in the Ukrainian villages. M.S.

I Testify

My father and I were arrested and tried in 1932 – 1933. I was sentenced to two years imprisonment and my father received eight years. Our crime was being “kurkuls”. I served my two years in the prison in Zaporizhya city and my father was taken to Siberia, never to return.

The chief of the Zaporizhya prison was Sklarsky. Our rations were 11 ounces of sticky bread and 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ pints of warm water. Each morning I saw 25 – 30 dead bodies carted away in wagons ordinarily used for hauling manure. These were people starved to death. The dead were dumped into a big hole at plant number 29. It was never covered, but after each dumping the corpses would be covered by a thin layer of earth. This went on for two years of my imprisonment, day after day.

The prison was designed for 6,000 persons but sometimes there were 15,000. The cells were so overcrowded that one could be stifled to death. The people had to remain on their feet day and night because there was no room to sit. Our petitions were ignored and those who dared to criticize were taken away, never to come back.

The GPU ordered people to appear in its office every day. These offices were close by and I saw people daily tortured to death. The prison was replenished daily by 100 – 150 fresh arrests and one company was sent to Siberia each week.

Andriy Zaporozhets

From: *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Vol. 1), Toronto, 1953.

Group Activity:

Draw the following diagram on a large sheet of paper!

Using it, compare the three eyewitness accounts you have read!

Group Discussion:

1. The "Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms" is the document that guarantees that Canadian citizens will always be free. Read it.
2. Do you think it's important to have such a "Charter"? Why?
3. Which rights and freedoms that we have in Canada today were denied the Ukrainian people in Ukraine in the 1930s?
4. How can people make sure that the "Charter" will actually be enforced?

Group Presentation:

1. Write a letter to your member of parliament expressing your opinion of the "Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms".
2. Include in the letter why you think freedom is important and what you know can happen when freedom is denied (e.g. 1930s Ukraine).
3. Read the letter to your class and invite any other students to sign it if they wish.

Communist Terror in Nahilne

Our family consisted of six members, our parents and four sons. We owned 14 acres of land, two cows, a house and a stable. For these possessions the Russian communist government classed us a "kurkuls". My oldest brother was sentenced to eight years imprisonment and the second oldest was given ten years. Both were sent away to build the White Sea Canada. The rest of us were ordered not to leave the premises.

On March 18, 1931, communist government representatives came to our house, headed by Solovyov and Ivanov. We were ordered to prepare to leave but to take nothing out of the house, not even extra clothing. We got on a sled, which was ready for us, and were driven to Rostyh. There we were put on a train consisting of 48 freight cars each one packed with 45 people.

We came to Krasnoyarsk and were all herded into a large hall used as a washroom, with cold water only laid in, and with no segregation as to sex or age. After this we were again packed on to the train and we proceeded to a camp on the other side of the Yenisey River. There we lived in dugouts measuring about 5 ½ by 27 1/3 yards. Stalin's satrap, who was the camp director, informed us that every ten people were to be allotted 2 ¾ yards of space in the dugout dwelling. After a week in these holes we were moved to an isolation camp in Tomsk, which had 13,000 people in it.

During my stay in this isolation camp at 18 to 20 people died daily from starvation and different diseases. The director of this prison was Podolsky. We received 9 ounces of bread per person and a bowl of murky unsalted water, which for some reason was referred to as soup. It stank of spoiled fish.

In May a convoy came and picked out those who were still able to move, to be shipped to a port on the Tom River. We were brought to the Bakhcharsk Administration. The Commandant's name was Belkin. We were shown to an area almost completely surrounded by water and told that we would have to build our own dwellings but we were given no materials or instruments. The men were driven to work building a new harbor. We were allotted 7 ounces of bread and were expected to procure additional food wherever and however we could. The water was unfit for drinking and these harrowing conditions soon became too much for the people. They became ill and died.

There were about 5,000 persons in the Bakhcharsk Administration. From here we were transferred to the Parbinsk Administration where Maksymov was the Commandant transferring with us later to the Bundyursk Administration. There we were given one axe and one saw to ten families and told to build our own dwellings. For each person we were given 6 1/5 ounces of rye flour and nothing else, not even salt. When my father and I completed our hut from tree branches Masymov ousted us and gave it to another family. We were told to build another. A Canadian Ukrainian, Yukhym Korkyshka died in this camp.

Conditions became so unbearable that a revolt broke out. To stifle it a mounted division of NKVD came from Tomsk. As a first step towards bringing the uprising under control they shot a former priest and his family of four.

The foregoing is a concise account of the true experiences of my close relatives and myself. There is much more; and much that has been obliterated from my memory by the passing of time.

Ivan Bondarenko

From: *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Vol. 1), Toronto, 1953.

Group Activity:

$2 \frac{3}{4}$ yards = 2.5 meters

1. In the classroom measure a space that is 2.5m x 2.5m.
2. Mark off the space with tape.
3. Place ten students into the space.

Group Discussion:

John Bondarenko had to live in a space that was 2.5 m square together with 10 other prisoners.

1. What would it be like to live like John Bondarenko had to?
2. What would you be able to do in that space?
3. What would you not be able to do in that space?
4. Imagine that you and 9 of your friends had to spend a week in such a space! What do you think would happen?

Group Presentation:

1. Present a short radio news report intended for a Canadian audience.
2. Describe the living conditions in the Siberian camps of the 1930s.
3. You may wish to include interviews with survivors or relatives of victims.
4. If you know both Ukrainian and English, you might want to do the interviews in Ukrainian and have the radio announcer speak in English.

Intermediate Division

Topic: ‘World view of the Holodomor’

Sub-topics:

Grade 7 – “Disinformation in 1932 – 1933 and the reaction of the Western World”

Grade 8 – “Genocide as a political tool”

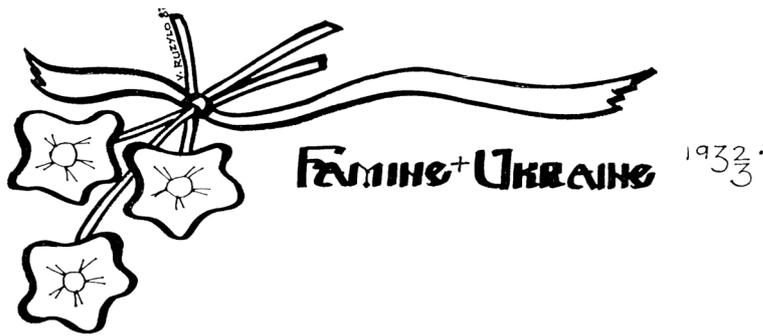
Grade 7

Topic: “World view of the Holodomor”

Sub-topic: “Disinformation in 1932 – 1933 and the reaction of the Western World”

Concepts:

1. 10 million Ukrainians died during the Holodomor.
2. The Soviet government resolved its conflict with the Ukrainian people by starving them to death.
3. The Soviet government censored all press reports from Ukraine in 1932 – 1933.
4. The Soviet government staged a campaign of disinformation to cover up the Holodomor.
5. There are still people today who are denying the Holodomor.
6. It is right to help those in need.



**10 million Ukrainians
died during the
Holodomor.**

Something to Consider:

* Remember a time when you were hungry. How did you feel? What did you want to do?

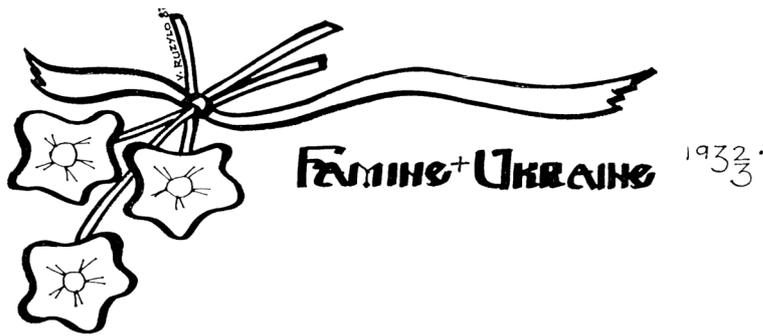
*What is the population of the city in which you live? Compare the population of your city to the number of Ukrainians that starved during the Holodomor!

During the winter of 1932 – 1933 over 7 million Ukrainians starved to death. They starved because the government of the Soviet Union had removed all of their foodstuffs. Prior to that winter over 3 million Ukrainian priests, teachers, artists, intellectuals and political leaders perished from hunger in concentration camps. In total the Holodomor took the lives of 10 million Ukrainians.

There are many eyewitness testimonies, which verify the atrocities that occurred in Ukraine during the winter of 1932 – 1933.

The following is part of the testimony presented by Varvara Dibert before the United States Ukraine Famine Commission in Washington D.C. on October 8, 1986.

Ever since the revolution Kyiv had been full of orphans from age six to fifteen. Although the government set up orphanages, the number of homeless orphans continued to grow, especially when dekulakization started and later when the famine began. Near the house where I lived was a large building. The government converted this building into a so-called "collector" for homeless children caught on the streets and who, after sanitary inspection, were sent to orphanages. When leaving my home, I would often see how trucks would pull up there and the police would take out the filthy, bedraggled children who had been caught on the streets. A guard stood at the entrance and no one was permitted inside. During the winter of 1932 – 33, I saw five or six times how in the early morning they took out of the building the bodies of half-naked children, covered them with filthy tarpaulins, and piled them onto trucks. Going as far as Artem Street, I would hear a loudspeaker (at that time there was one on every corner) blare out how children lived in horrible conditions in capitalist countries and what a wonderful life they led in our own Socialist Fatherland.



**The Soviet
government
resolved its
conflict with the
Ukrainian people
by starving them**

Something to Consider:

*What did the Ukrainian people, living in Ukraine during the 1930s want? What did the Soviet government want? How did the Soviet government resolve the conflict between what it wanted and what the people wanted?

*Why would a government remove all food from its citizens?

The Soviet government forcibly removed all grain and all foodstuffs in the fall of 1932. According to currently available documents this was done because:

1. The Soviet authorities wanted the Ukrainian people to become Soviet. They did not want there to be a Ukrainian language and literature, a Ukrainian form of religious practice, Ukrainian songs and culture.
2. The Ukrainian people did not want a Soviet form of government. They wanted to remain Ukrainians.
3. The Soviet government needed to sell large quantities of grain to Britain, France and the USA in order to buy heavy machinery for its ammunition factories.

The following is part of the testimony presented by Tatiana Pawlichka before the United States Ukraine Famine Commission in Washington D.C. on October 8, 1986.

In 1932, I was ten years old, and I remember well what happened in my native village in the Kyiv region. In the spring of that year, we had virtually no seed. The communists had taken all the grain, and although they saw that we were weak and hungry, they came and searched for more grain. My mother had stashed away some corn that had already sprouted, but they found that, too, and took it. What we did manage to sow the starving people pulled up out of the ground and ate.

In the villages and on the collective farms (our village had two collectives), a lot of land lay fallow, because people had nothing to sow, and there wasn't enough manpower to do the sowing. Most people couldn't walk and those few who could, had not strength. When, at harvest time, there weren't enough local people to harvest the grain, others were sent in to help on the collectives. These people spoke Russian, and they were given provisions.

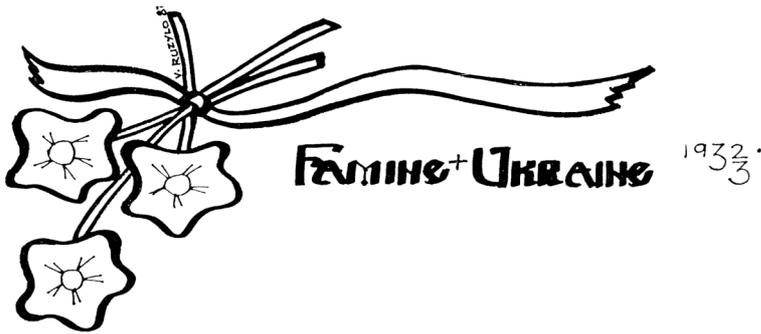
After the harvest, the villagers tried to go out in the field to look for gleanings, and the communists would arrest them and shoot at them, and send them to Siberia. My aunt, Tatiana Rudenko, was taken away. They said she had stolen the property of the collective farm.

That summer, the vegetables couldn't even ripen – people pulled them out of the ground – still green – and ate them. People ate leaves, nettles, milkweed, sedges. By autumn, no one had any chickens or cattle. Here and there, someone had a few potatoes or beets. People coming in from other villages told the very same story. They would travel all over trying to get food. They would fall by the roadside, and none of us could do anything to help. Before the ground froze, they were just left lying there dead, in the snow; or, if they died in the house, they were dragged out to the cattle-shed, and they would lie there frozen until spring. There was no one to dig graves.

Something to Do:

Research the methods developed by Stalin to suppress opposition in the Soviet empire. Which of them are still used in other totalitarian countries today? What techniques are being used by current political leaders to suppress dissent?





The Soviet government censored all press reports from Ukraine in 1932-1933.

Something to Consider:

- *Why would the Soviet authorities not want the Western World to know that a massive famine was raging in Ukraine?
- *Why would a reporter write lies and submit them to a newspaper?
- *Why would two American reports submit such completely different reports?

Walter Duranty was a famous journalist, who lived and worked during the period of the Holodomor. He was on assignment in the Soviet Union during the winter of 1932 – 1933. During this period he wired a number of articles, which were published in “The New York Times” in which he stated that there was no famine in Ukraine.

However, not all journalists were like Walter Duranty. There were those who reported on what they had actually seen. One such journalist was Thomas Walker who reported for “The Chicago American”.

The following excerpt is from the book *Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia, 1917 to 1937* by James William Crowl published in Washington, D.C. by University Press of America in 1982 (p.198).

The failure of the Western newspapers to do all that they could to inform their readers about conditions in Russia was never more apparent than during the Soviet famine of the early 1930s. Although the home newspapers were aware of the travel restrictions placed on their correspondents at the start of 1933, there was no outcry from them. Moreover, while there were clues enough even before the travel ban, that conditions were not satisfactory in the countryside and that there might be a food shortages, only the most conservative newspapers in the West gave the early reports of famine the attention they deserved. It was almost as if the Western press itself was willing to accept a role in the famine cover-up.

The New York Times' role in this dismal press coverage of the Soviet Union seems to have been especially onerous. While the Times was (and is) widely regarded as one of the world's best newspapers, its reputation for accuracy and fairness was clearly not deserved in the case of its coverage of the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1933.

The following is an excerpt from the article "Russians Hungry But Not Starving" written by Walter Duranty for the *New York Times* and published on March 31, 1933.

There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition.

The following is an excerpt from another article "Big Ukraine Crop Taxes Harvesters" written by Walter Duranty for the *New York Times* and published on September 18, 1933.

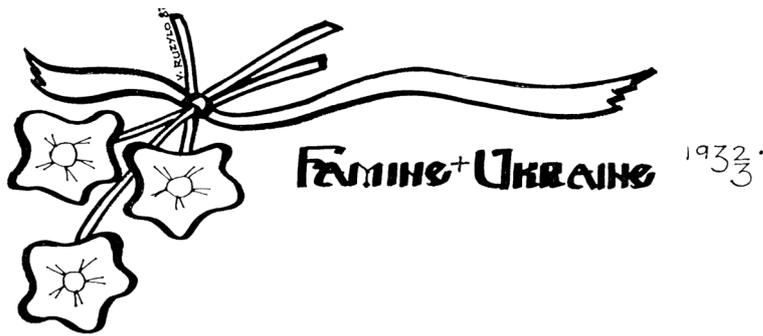
This visitor has just completed a 200-mile trip through the heart of Ukraine and can say positively that the harvest is splendid and all talk of famine now is ridiculous.

The following excerpt presents a very different view. It is from an article written by Thomas Walker and published in *The Chicago American* on March 6, 1935.

About twenty miles south of Kiev, I came upon a village that was practically extinct by starvation. There had been fifteen houses in this village and a population of forty-odd persons. Every dog and cat had been eaten. The horses and oxen had all been appropriated by the Bolsheviks to stock the collective farms. In one hut they were cooking a mess that defied analysis. There were bones, pigweed, skin, and what looked like a boot top in this pot. The way the remaining half dozen inhabitants eagerly watched this slimy mess showed the state of their hunger. One boy of about 15 years, whose face and arms and legs were simply tightly drawn skin over bones, had a stomach that was swollen to twice its normal size. He was an orphan; his father had died of starvation a month before and he showed me the body. The boy had covered the body with straw, there being no shovels in the village since the last raid of the GPU. He stated his mother had gone away one day searching for food and had not returned. The boy wanted to die – he suffered intensely with his swollen stomach and was the

Something to Do:

Imagine that you are a journalist reporting from Ukraine in the winter of 1932 – 1933. Write two reports – one that will get past the Soviet censors and one that will provide the truth, as you have witnessed.



The Soviet government staged a campaign of disinformation to cover up the Holodomor.

The following is an eyewitness account by F. Fedorchuk published in *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Vol. 1) in Toronto, Canada in 1953.

How Communists Deceive Foreign Missions

Many people from Ukraine, that is, those who could move around and had some money to spend, traveled to Orel and other Russian provinces to buy bread. These travelers were especially numerous during the last two weeks of June 1933, when the weather was fine. Since the railway station of Lozova was a junction everyone had to change there, and as the trains were crammed with people some had to wait their turn to board them. The waiting period was never less than two weeks, often longer. Those returning home with a little food for their families would consume their scanty purchases and, unable to get home and lacking any other food, starved to death in and around the station.

At this time the Turkish mission, on its way home from Moscow, wished to have a meal at the station restaurant at Lozova. But the station was full of people with bags, dead bodies; swollen human shadows, full of rubbish, alive with lice. The GPU sent trucks and gathered all the dead and those who were still alive but unable to walk, and took them to an unknown destination. The rest of the ragged human mass, who could walk, were taken about 18 miles out of the city and forbidden to return under threats of a fate worse than death, which meant interrogation in the cells of the GPU.

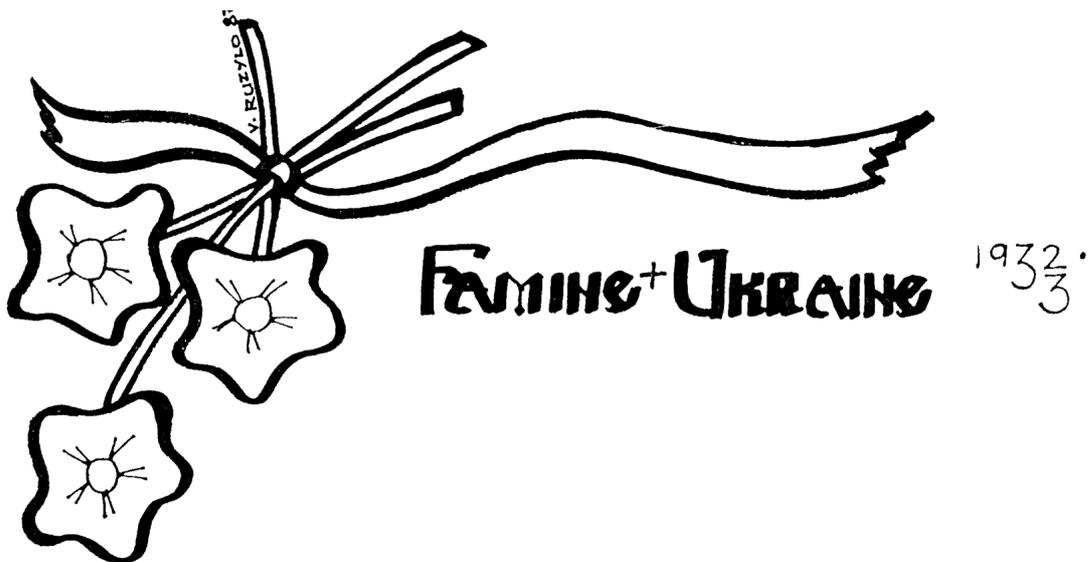
Then the station was cleaned and all kinds of food were brought from Kharkiv with pretty round cheeked girls as waitresses. To complete the deception, the station was filled with a "public", also from Kharkiv, dressed in new clothes, gaudy neckties and hats who briskly walked around as if on some business of their own. All wore smiles on their faces.

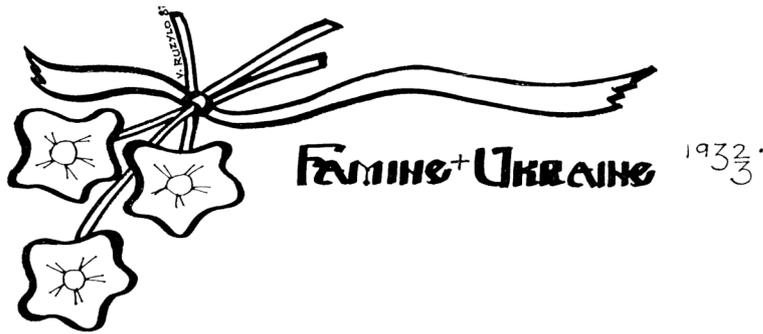
The station restaurant was also filled with people who sat at the tables loaded with all kinds of wine, fish, fried chicken and caviar. As to prices I only remember that fried chicken cost 25 kopeks.

When the Turks arrived they saw clean, prosperous looking people at the station and the restaurant filled with customers eating whatever they desired. One fellow hardly touched the chicken, which he had ordered and pushed it aside as if disgusted with it. The Turks were surprised and nonplussed. Perhaps they had expected to see something different. But they had a very inexpensive meal in Ukraine in 1933, even though they did not see any of the famine then raging in the country. Or maybe they did see it somewhere else.

Something to Do:

Discuss the nature of disinformation? Why would a group of people be interested in spreading disinformation? What can citizens in a free society do to combat the use of disinformation?





There are still people today, who are denying the Holodomor.

Something to Consider:

*Why are there people and organizations today that continue to claim that the Holodomor did not occur?

Today, there are still people and governments that are denying the Holodomor, saying that it never happened.

The following is an excerpt from a news release of the Press Office of the USSR Embassy in Canada issued on April 28, 1983.

Recent stories in the Western news media try to create an impression that there was an artificially created famine in the Ukraine in 1932 – 22 because Ukrainian farmers, allegedly, resisted collective farming.

Indeed, the situation in Ukraine as well as in other parts of the USSR in 1932 was quite difficult. Yet it was not as critical as it is portrayed in the West. And, of course, it was not because somebody wanted to make it bad, but because of a number of reasons, drought being the major one.

The masters of the new anti-Soviet campaign (regarding the Famine)... tend to concentrate on the emotional side of the story overplaying human suffering... Of course, many families were badly affected. Some did suffer, especially those whose husbands and sons were murdered by Kulak bandits. Some villages felt a terrible strain after their grain reserves were burned, or cattle poisoned (by the Kulaks). Nevertheless, the whole picture in the Ukraine was not of a near collapse with a smell of a nation-wide tragedy as it is portrayed by the most zealous anti-Soviet writers in the media of Canada. On the contrary, the atmosphere of vigorous work and unparalleled enthusiasm prevailed...

Something to Do:

Discuss what we as citizens in a free society can do to prevent genocide in the future?

Grade 8

Topic: “World view of the Holodomor”

Sub-topic: “Genocide as a political tool”